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ABSTRACT

The literature review presented in this paper examined the available research in the area of the rapid burnout of beginning teachers (50 percent of America's beginning public school teachers leave the classroom within their first 7 years of experience and never return to the profession; more than two-thirds of that percentage do so within the first 4 years). Evidence, obtained from journal articles, research reports, and position papers, was categorized according to the following influencing factors: (1) teacher's relationship with students; (2) teacher's personality; (3) disruptive student behavior; (4) extreme workload; (5) negative school environment; (6) unclear expectations; (7) lack of participation in decision making; (8) deficient parental support; (9) shortage of teaching time; (10) poor university preparation; (11) low pay; (12) insufficient mentoring; (13) teacher's gender; (14) teacher's marital status; and (15) teacher's education level. Each printed item was examined for implications leading to methods of possible future prevention. No evidence of one clear-cut causal factor was identified in the studies reviewed; however, implications for the necessity of further research were indicated. (Contains 63 references.) (LL)

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Effects of Non-instructional Variables on Attrition Rate of Beginning Teachers: A Literature Review

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"EFFECTS OF NON-INSTRUCTIONAL VARIABLES ON ATTRITION RATE OF BEGINNING TEACHERS"

The purpose of the review was to identify researched factors indicating cause for the 50% drop-out rate of America's teachers in the profession for less than seven years. Evidence was obtained through the perusal of 63 related works. Included were journal articles, research reports, and position papers. Each printed item was examined for implications leading to methods of possible future prevention.

Many of the reported studies were conducted either in small rural school settings or in large inner-city settings, with little attention given to suburban schools. Much of the emphasis was placed on regions in the northeastern and in the western areas of the country, with few published reports from other sections.

Findings were categorized into 15 separate contributing dimensions: Relationship with students, teacher's personality, disruptive student behavior, extreme workload, negative school environment, unclear expectations, lack of participation in decision-making, lack of parental support, lack of teaching time, poor university preparation, low pay, lack of mentors, teacher's gender, teacher's marital status, and teacher's education level.

There was no evidence of one clear-cut causing factor in the studies reviewed; however, implications for the necessity of further studies, possibly in other geographic areas of the country including a wider sampling of school settings were evident.

A shocking 50% of America's beginning public school teachers leave the classroom within their first seven years of experience and never return to the profession. Greater than two-thirds of that percentage do so within the first four years (Huling-Austin, 1986). As this trend has worsened during the past score of years, many studies have been conducted in effort to determine cause in individual education units throughout the nation. According to Brookhart (1992), early stages of professional demographic information and its relationship to stress indicate reasoning as to why the beginners in a selected segment of classroom teachers in the state of Pennsylvania have resigned prematurely over a period of time.

The nature of teaching within itself can lead to such elevated levels of stress that teachers begin to burnout and either leave the profession or continue to teach at a minimal level of competence (Farber, 1984; Schwab, 1982).

According to Osborne (1992), upon completion of student teaching a large percentage of students decide not to further pursue a career in teaching, primarily due to the heavy workload they see ahead and the demanding nature of the job. As a result, we are unable to recruit the desired number of undergraduates into our teacher education programs which in turn creates greater overload on teachers already in practice.

Mann (1989) found that many beginning teachers who take on the full responsibility of the classroom for the first time found

the stress load to be much greater than the protected experience of student teaching.

Starnaman and Miller (1992) considered the relationships among the three dimensions of rapid burnout; communication variables, organizational stressors and the outcome variables of occupational commitment and job satisfaction. The findings were that overload and role conflict are major sources of stress leading to burnout, especially in beginning teachers.

Westerhouse (1980) concluded that burnout in teachers decreased as length of time in the organization increased, but that the feelings of effectiveness and personal accomplishment also decreased over time. Allred (1980) reported that younger teachers who became dissatisfied with their jobs, quit, thus causing the overall number of years of experience in most studies involving total population of teachers to be low. In 1988 34% of all teachers in America reported plans of leaving the field within 5 years (Louis Harris & Associates).

Although burnout is a very complex concept which has aroused a great deal of debate as to definition, most educational investigators are in general agreement that it is a negative psychological phenomenon which occurs in an individual (Maslach, 1982). In fields of human service work, burnout has been categorized by Maslach into three areas: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization and (c) reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is characterized by a "loss of feeling or concern, a loss of trust, a loss of interest, a

loss of spirit" (p. 323); depersonalization is a negative shift in response to others, and reduced personal accomplishment is a loss of sense of efficacy on the job. According to Schuler (1980), burnout, though occurring within the individual, can be caused at other levels. It can occur, due to situations in the working group or at the organizational level.

Goodlad (1984) concluded that if one goes into teaching with expectations of being able to teach and be of service and then is frustrated in realizing the added expectations, dissatisfaction sets in and quitting becomes an alternative.

Cherniss (1988) reported that reasons for attrition at such a rapid rate continue to remain unclear. Although limited research has been found to deal specifically with causes of rapid burnout in beginning teachers of the southeastern region of the United States, the data analyses from works conducted in other areas and regions of our nation raise some issues for investigation which may be easily adapted to the southeast.

This review of literature relating to rapid burnout of beginning teachers is categorized according to the following influencing factors: Relationship with students, teacher's personality, disruptive student behavior, extreme workload, negative school environment, unclear expectations, lack of participation in decision-making, lack of parental support, lack of teaching time, poor university preparation, low pay, lack of mentors, teacher's gender, teacher's marital status and teacher's education level.

Relationship with Students

Shumaker and Brownell (1984) have found that interaction with students is a central variable in the burnout process. Abu-Hilal and Salameh (1992) implicated that even teachers experiencing burnout, still express caring attitudes toward their students and hesitate to attribute the state of burnout to the students.

Borthwick et al. (1981) found that positive and negative feedback from students to teacher had a greater impact on beginning secondary teachers than on beginning elementary teachers. As a result elementary teachers reported greater levels of job satisfaction than their colleagues in the secondary schools, and stayed in the profession longer.

Cole (1983) found that beginning teachers saw themselves as having greater concern for students than did their supervising teachers. Stern (1974) once again found that positive interaction with peer teachers improves the quality of the teacher's relationship with children and increases longevity in teaching.

Howell and Bressler (1988) reported that teachers have revealed a preference for the personalities categorized in the intuitive domain of thinking and feeling when interacting with their students.

Wallen (1990) found that students who interact most positively with teachers are those with learning styles which match the teachers dominate teaching style, and suggests the need

for teachers to increase their awareness of the various learning styles in order to improve relationships with their students and increase job satisfaction.

Teacher's Personality

Success in the classroom is often paralleled by the teacher's positive self-concept. Fishburn (1966) stated that teaching is a role and can be learned.

Carrier (1982) studied the relationship of teacher personality to actual classroom learning behavior and found a direct relationship to student success and increased teacher security.

Wiesenfeld (1975) found that teachers with instructional styles involving habitual, consistent patterns of planned strategies promoted learning and expressed more job satisfaction and stayed in the profession longer.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Interaction with disruptive students is often cited by teachers as a leading factor influencing stress in the classroom and on school grounds (Cichon & Koff, 1980; Dedrick, Hawked, & Smith, 1981; Feitber & Tokar, 1982; Similansky, 1984). Fimian (1987) stated that beginning teachers often experience problems with discipline, perhaps due to the perceived rejection of the teacher's authority. Similanski (1984) reported that class disruptions and interaction with problem students have taken away from teaching time and create stressful situations, causing teachers to leave the profession. Starnaman and Miller (1992)

suggest that beginning teachers could benefit from learning strategies for dealing with difficult students and how to avoid power struggles.

Extreme Workload

Teachers have complained of too much paperwork and an overload of students as sources of job related stress (Fimian, 1987). According to Maslach (1982) workload stress occurs when the burden exceeds the person's ability to handle it.

Starnaman and Miller (1992) suggest that principals be well-advised to have a clear picture of the teacher's current workload and their abilities to handle it, before adding to their duties. Duties which conflict with classroom activities should be given special consideration to increase student success and job satisfaction.

Albert Shanker, NEA representative, says that teacher's workloads are staggering and that there is no other profession besides teaching where people are thinking of leaving after only two years (Louis Harris and Associates, 1992).

According to Houston & Felder (1982) the beginning teacher is expected to, the very first day on the job, perform the very same tasks and teach approximately the same number of students as the 25 year veteran teachers. They compare this to the breaking of a horse.

Negative School Environment

Lack of social support from peers has been found to be a strong influential factor in causing stress in beginning

teachers, especially lack of support from the principal (Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1988; Levitov & Wangberg, 1983). According to Jackson (1983), the "feelings of personal accomplishment are highest for teachers in supportive environments, with support from one's principal appearing to be particularly important" (p. 636). The impact of support within the school setting, due to the principal's inability to make broad range structural changes, is limited, according to Ray and Miller (1989).

Morey and Murphy (1990) stated that group support programs for beginning teachers bring about improvement of teacher quality and retention, and Stern (1974) by way of The School Environment Inventory found that good teacher relationships positively influenced the quality of teacher' relationships with children and job satisfaction.

Laurel (1991) suggested the employment of peer coaching in problem areas to offer support of teachers as a means to enhance quality and retention of beginning teachers.

Richman and Rosenfeld (1987) suggested the necessity of developing new models of communicative support for dealing with burnout for teachers and that these support groups may be an available alternative for beginners. This could provide beginners with a shared reality and the emotional and task-oriented support needed in dealing with daily inherent stressors of work which are causing some burnout in beginning teachers.

Unclear Expectations

Unclear expectations for beginning teachers have been found to be a predictor of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization resulting in attrition (Schwab, et al., 1982).

Ray and Miller (1989) indicated that good organization and communication of expectations on the part of the principal filters down to a more organized faculty and staff and produces better schools and is directly related to student success and teachers' job satisfaction.

Participation in decision making has been found to lessen the ambiguity of expectations in the teaching profession and thus serves as a stress reliever and aids in teacher retention (Brissie, et al., 1988).

Uncertainty can involve role conflict resulting in job-related tension and dissatisfaction causing individuals to seek other professions (Van Sell, Brief & Schuler, 1981).

Lack of Participation in Decision Making

According to Jackson (1983) participation in decision-making reduces role conflict and ambiguity and is positively correlated with an individual's perceived influence and perceived supervisory support and increases job satisfaction. Miller, et al. (1990) also found strong support for the effect of participation in decision making on satisfaction, but in contrast found weak support for its effort on productivity.

Educational research also emphasizes the importance of participation in decision making as a stress reducer (Brissie, et al., 1988).

Maeroff (1988) charges principals to listen to, respect and value teachers in school management. Teachers, according to this author, should assist with or take the responsibility for certain aspects of the school curriculum such as planning, scheduling, budgeting and the setting of goals on all levels. Teachers buy into this kind of system and are more satisfied with their jobs.

McElrath (1988) encourages "the development of an environment in which the teachers act as professionals and are treated as professionals" (p. 6).

According to Smyth (1989) school systems across the nation are considering the idea of "teacher empowerment" as a way to improve education. He suggests that the feeling of powerlessness, hopelessness and lack of respect among teachers is driving outstanding teachers to other occupations.

Lack of Parental Support

According to the Louis Harris poll (1992) new teachers believe that all children can learn. Two years in the classroom, however, changes their minds. Teacher optimism is destroyed due to the many problems children bring with them to school and the lack of parental support.

Mechlenburger (1990) says that whenever students are involved in learning which incorporates real-life experiences good teaching is going on. He says that teachers and

administrators can be held accountable for what the students learn; but parents only for knowing where their children are.

Kochan and Herrington (1992) found a strong positive impact of parent involvement on student success and an equally negative impact from the lack of parental involvement. According to Vandegrift and Greene (1992) parental involvement is a means to better schools, higher test scores, students success and as a preventive strategy for teacher exhaustion and burnout.

Lack of Teaching Time

According to Shulman (1988) beginning teachers often complain of stress due to the inability to set consistent daily teaching schedules because of specially funded programs which draw so many of the students from the classroom at various times of the day; and of groups of disruptive students who require immediate attention taking away from instructional time.

Bradford (1991) suggests year-round schools which incorporate short breaks on a quarter system. Arguments for the year-round school are that they provide more time for continuous learning, they are compatible with the American lifestyle and they reduce teacher burnout.

Flaxman and Inger (1992) encourage teacher-supervised family involvement in the education process as a stress reliever for teachers who are frustrated due to the added responsibilities placed on them and not enough time in the school day to attend to individual needs of each student.

Poor University Preparation

Davis (1989) expounds upon the statistics indicating the high attrition rate among beginning teachers much of which is being attributed to lack of preparation for the real-world of today's classroom.

Bernhardt and Shulman (1990) emphasize to universities the importance of taking a close look at content and strategies for assisting new teachers in order to help retain the promising beginners.

Ellerman and Arnn (1989) offer an overview of issues and concerns regarding traditional experiences and student teaching experiences in effort to determine where they are weak and how they have failed the high numbers of beginning teacher drop-outs. They noted that clinical teaching experiences should provide a variety of experiences in real classrooms with pre-service teachers as active participants, and supervisors as consultants and helpers. Ellerman and Arnn also suggest the training of cooperating teachers.

Wallin (1990) says the universities and teacher colleges should offer tangible classroom strategies in real settings to prevent the shock leading to emotional stress leading to burnout in the classroom for beginning teachers.

Shulman and Colbert (1988) provide a casebook of candid stressful situations encountered by teachers who enter the profession with no previous real classroom preparation. The

situations are accompanied by reflective thoughts as to how proper training could help the situation.

Low Pay

According to Roche (1979) higher pay is directly linked to higher levels of productivity and job satisfaction resulting in retention. Alexander (1986) says "why not pay teachers more for teaching well" (p. 202). "Many teachers are required to supplement their income with part-time and summer employment" (A Nation At Risk, follow-up report from governors).

National Education Association President Bob Chase (1993) says that some teachers in the nation are paid barely enough to stay competitive in comparison to some industry employees with education and responsibility comparable to teachers earning an amount that is the teacher's salary doubled. Chase says that the salary disparities weaken the districts' ability to attract and retain high quality people in the teaching profession.

Lack of Mentors

A mentor has been defined as an experienced adult who guides, advises and supports inexperienced proteges for the purpose of furthering their careers (Bogat & Redner, 1984). Having a mentor, according to Roche (1979) has been linked with faster promotion and higher pay.

Rost (1974) suggests six criteria for a good mentor teacher: (a) hold a master's degree, (b) be employed for at least the sixth year as a teacher, (c) be on full contract, (d) be active in local, state and national teacher organizations, (e) have in

operation an outstanding productive program and (f) possess professional spirit. Bost suggests that the beginning teacher should have a fun-filled and confidence-building learning experience.

According to Guerrero and Goldberg (1988), a good mentoring situation works. They authored the report on a two-year post-college induction process of internship and residency piloted in New York City. The effort was to enable future educators to develop in the context of a supportive, non-evaluative peer relationship for beginning teachers. The findings indicated that the participating first-year teachers expressed to a greater extent an intent to continue their goal of career teaching, compared to first year teachers not involved in the project.

Johnson and James (1986) have acclaimed that practices involving the use of experienced educators in guiding relatively inexperienced teachers is of value not only to the beginning teacher but also to the mentor.

Teacher's Gender

Patterns of stressors for male and female samples of beginning teachers were found by Martray and Adams (1981) to be similar, with the female sample as a whole showing higher degrees of stress in the area of personal security, and with females showing higher scores on the emotional exhaustion scales.

Allred (1980) found no significant difference in the relationship between job satisfaction and gender.

Teacher's Marital Status

Martray and Adams (1981) reported that comparisons in marital status did not produce major differences in reported stressors on the job. Maslach and Jackson (1981) reported, however, that stress on the job often results in conflict at home, resulting in a relationship to emotional exhaustion affecting teacher performance in return.

Teacher's Education Level

In establishing the MBI, Maslach and Jackson (1981) reported findings which indicate that the more education a subject has, the higher the burnout score on the emotional exhaustion scale, and the lower the level of education, the higher the burnout score on depersonalization.

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